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ABSTRACT

Project Interface was designed to bring together the two distinct fields of special education and vocational education in order to blend the efforts of the two fields to overcome several problems: differing vocabularies, methods, content, vocational evaluation, appropriate placement, teacher preparation, and the differing expectations of special education and vocational personnel. To bridge these disparate elements, Project Interface brought together vocational and special education personnel from three different school districts in the state of Washington. These educators designed and implemented a vocational education model to increase access to vocational training programs by special education/special needs students and to assist mainstreamed students while they are enrolled in vocational education classes. The vocational education model prepared by Project Interface encompasses the following elements: (1) vocational assessment, (2) entry-level skills, (3) materials, (4) curriculum, and (5) individualized educational plan (IEP) involvement. This standardized life-centered model for special education students is expected to enhance all aspects of vocational education for special students and promote building-level support teams for high school teachers involved in the project. (Author/KC)

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FINAL REPORT

Project No. 85-AXV (050) NB

PROJECT INTERFACE

CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT PROJECT
Conducted Under
Public Law 94-482

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31 March 1986

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ABSTRACT

Central Valley School District, East Valley School District, Freeman School District, and West Valley School District, together with the Spokane Valley Cooperative for Special Education, a cooperative administered by the Central Valley School District, lacked a standardized vocational education program model for delivering services to special education students as well as any special needs students.

Project Interface was designed to bring together the two distinct fields of special education and vocational education for the purpose of blending the efforts of the two distinct professions to overcome several related problems: differing vocabularies, methods, content, vocational evaluation, appropriate placement, teacher preparation, and differing teacher expectations between special education and vocational personnel. To bridge these disparate elements, Project Interface brought together vocational and special education personnel from three different school districts. These educators designed and implemented a vocational education model to increase access into vocational training programs by special education/special needs students and to better assist mainstreamed students while they are enrolled in vocational training classes.

Personnel involved with Project Interface prepared a vocational education model that encompasses: (1) vocational assessment, (2) entry-level skills, (3) materials, (4) curriculum and (5) I.E.P. involvement.

The implementation of Project Interface provides both vocational educators and special education personnel in three different school districts with a standardized life-centered education model for special education students. As the model matures and develops a standardized approach, it will enhance placement procedures via vocational assessment, curriculum, instructional techniques and methods, selection of materials and the I.E.P. procedures for mainstreamed students, and a building level support teams for high school teachers involved in the project.

GOAL AND OBJECTIVES

The major focus of Project Interface was to develop a vocational education model that would establish standardized procedures for providing relevant vocational experiences to special education students mainstreamed into vocational training classes. Plans were to initiate a model in the area of Home and Family Living at one senior high school. The model was developed, tested, evaluated and modified and was then implemented in three other senior high schools. Full implementation will take between two and three school years. The project goal and objectives follow:

GOAL

Place all handicapped students identified via an IEP team into a vocational program of Home and Family Living. These students will achieve success in the areas of (1) decision making, (2) child development, (3) foods and nutrition, (4) clothing, (5) housing and (6) money management.

Objective #1 (Completed May 1985)

The staff involved will assess the current processes of the placement of special education students and the instruction of special education students into Home and Family Living education and will prepare a list of concerns and student needs by April 1, 1985.

Objective #2 (Completed August 1985)

The staff involved will evaluate and design the curriculum of Home and Family Living for special education students to include classroom instructional materials and student learning objectives. Objectives will be accomplished by August 1, 1985.

Objective #3 (Completed October 1985)

By September 1, 1985, an expanded IEP team will be identified to include instructors of Home and Family Living classes, school counselors and parents.

Objective #4 (Completed October 1985)

By October 15, 1985, special education students selected by an IEP team will be identified, assessed and placed into Home and Family Living vocational classes.

Objective #5 (Completed at student's IEP conferences September through November, 1985)

The parents of special education students who have been identified and placed into Home an and Family Living classes will be consulted and informed about their child's long-term vocational opportunities, that Home and Family Living classes can provide.

PROBLEM AREA

Vocational education and special education teachers had the same goals for students, successful experiences in the world of work; however, there had been no cooperative planning by these groups to make sure this successful experience happened.

Prior to the implementation of Project Interface, there was no design to deliver vocational skills training to special education students. Subsequently vocational and special education curricula have been modified to ensure that special education students will feel successful in transition from basic skills to vocational skills. The areas modified were: Home and Family Living, Business and Office/Distributive Education, and Industrial Arts. Other vocational areas are scheduled to be modified in September, 1986.

There was an abundance of literature addressing the need for an interdisciplinary approach in assisting special needs students to realize their full potential.

The most current literature available, "Special Needs in Technology Education," by Martin R. Kimeldorf, prompted the writing of this grant. In his book Kimeldorf draws a parallel between technology education and special education. In answering the question, "What role can the instructor in an industrial education setting play in preparing students with special needs to participate in the community to their full potential?" Kimeldorf states that the answer must be found in the cooperative efforts of two distinct fields: special education and technology education. A major point stressed in this book is that a "continuum of educational services, e.g., in-service, interdisciplinary efforts, adaptation of instruction or laboratory settings, remedial or tutorial services, and vocational evaluations, needs to be developed if mainstreaming...is ever to be fully realized."

In their book, "Public Law 94-142: Special Education in Transition," (1977) Barbacovi and Clelland state that although P.L. 94-142 mandates that a written IEP must be developed for all handicapped children and must contain specific instructional elements and involving specific individuals in its preparation, the Act "does not promote a type of curriculum or dictate methodology and it does not necessarily embrace behaviorism,...it does necessitate administrative planning, programming, and evaluation." The two authors recommend an interdisciplinary approach that includes the following responsibilities:

(a) specify policy assuring individual education programs for all children served directly by the local educational agency or through services contracted outside the local educational agency,

(b) program standards for each type of program alternative,

(c) developing a management system to assure involvement of instructional and support personnel working with an individual child to participate in the development and implementation of the child's IEP,

(d) providing facilities to assure optimum instructional programming,

(e) providing instructional materials,

(f) specifying procedure to assure periodic updating of IEP objectives,

(g) specifying procedures for annual review to assure appropriateness of IEP,

(h) providing for staff supervision,

(i) providing for techinical assistance,

(j) providing facilities for support personnel,

(k) providing clerical help for support service personnel to assist in report preparation,

(l) providing clerical help for instructional personnel to assist in maintenance of individual education programs,

(m) specifying procedures to assure participation of the teacher in parent conference activities, and

(n) developing an on-going inservice training program for all personnel involved in instructional activities with handicapped children.

Two salient attributes of the instructional component are:

(a) appropriate instruction will require administrative and instructional assurances that implementation of the individualized education program actually occurs, and

(b) appropriate instruction will require administrative supervision and support of further development of the individualized education program at the direct service and support service implementer level.

Attempts to solve the aforementioned problems had been on-going, and had involved numerous personnel from both distinct professions. However, it was noted that while these attempts had been indicated for the purpose of improving the situation, they had accomplished little because the efforts had not been coordinated and implemented via a team approach. Individuals from both vocational and special education areas had been provided with many opportunities to attend seminars and workshops addressing the problem. Upon their return from said gatherings they endeavored to "individually" implement changes in their building programs based upon information gleaned from the workshops. These efforts had good intentions but failed to accomplish what Project Interface is providing.

Until the initiation of Project Interface no attempts had been made to blend together vocational and special education personnel for the purpose of developing and/or modifying the existing curricula to better meet the needs of special needs students. Since the initiation of Project Interface, items a through n (above) have been addressed, with many currently being utilized in the Project Interface model.

PROJECT DESIGN

Project Interface encompasses four different school districts, five senior high schools, thirty-five teachers and administrators, and is presently serving the needs of approximately 240-250 special needs students on an annual basis.

The first priority for Project Interface was to carry out an inservice for all vocational-technical, counselors and special education teachers located in the five senior high schools of the four different school districts. The purpose of the inservice was to bring together all vocational-technical, counselors, and special education teachers (at the same time). The concept was, "Let's all begin together at letter "A" and progress toward letter "Z". Each person received one and one-half day of inservice relative to differing vocabularies, grading concerns, special materials, differing philosophies, federal, state and district rules and regulations, mainstreaming techniques, information about existing, on-going, programs throughout the State of Washington, curriculum modification, specialized planning, placement options, and program planning. No one group of people were set up as the "experts" which facilitated true problem-solving and ownership in the proposed changes. Teachers working together, became the experts.

The second step for Project Interface was to initiate a "Building Support Team" in each of the senior high schools. The teams consist of vocational-technical, counselor(s) and special education teachers. The responsibilities of the "Building Support Team" are (1) prioritize special needs students who would most benefit from a vocational skills assessment, (2) make referrals to the vocational assessment center, (3) disseminate assessment information to appropriate personnel, (4) determine what vocational-technical class is most appropriate for individual special needs student, (5) assist in developing I.E.P.'s and Individualized Vocational Plan for each handicapped and special needs student, (6) monitor student's progress, and (7) open lines of communication with parents and other outside agencies as appropriate.

Thirdly, under the auspices of Project Interface, a vocation assessment center was established. MESA (Microcomputer Evaluation and Screening Assessment) materials were purchased. An assessment individual was hired and trained to use the instrument, The rationale for a vocational assessment is three-fold. First, all educators involved with Project Interface need to know what vocational skills a student can demonstrate if they are to effectively prepare appropriate vocational goals from the MESA assessment. This assessment is reviewed by "Building Support

Team" members to determine what vocational classes in their building an individual student could best benefit from. Secondly, assessment information is shared with the students and/or parents to assist them in planning for careers after high school completion. Thirdly, vocational assessment information is shared with outside federal and state agencies such as employers, Department of Developmental Disabilities and Department of Vocational Rehabilitation to assist them in preparing additional programming for handicapped students.

The final ingredient of Project Interface was curricula modification. Initially, the plan called for modifying the Home and Family Life curricula at one senior high school. Once that was accomplished, it would serve as a model that could be transported from building to building, and would be used as an example for continued curricula modification in the Home hnd Family Life areas as well as Business and Office and Industrial Arts areas. What in fact transpired was the Home and Family Life curricula was modified in August, 1985. Monies were set aside for all special education and Home and Family Life teachers from the five senior high schools to meet together for accomplishing this modification. All personnel from the senior high schools were together at one time and each group of teachers developed their own "special" curricula. This concept worked well and therefore considerably decreased the time necessary for curricula modification. Thus, the same procedure was utilized for modifying the Business and Office/ Distributive Education curricula.

At present both the Home and Family Life and Business and Office Distributive Education curricula have been modified. The Home and Family Life curricula has been printed and distributed to all personnel; however, the Business and Office/Distributive Education curricula is still in the process of being printed. It should be completed and distributed by June, 1986.

Modification of the Industrial Arts curricula is scheduled to take place in August, 1986, when we will again bring all personnel from the five senior high schools together at one time.

RESULTS AND ACCOMPLISHMENTS

The most important result of the introduction of Project Interface is the interfacing that now takes place between special education and vocational-technical personnel. Prior to this program, interfacing between the two groups of educators was initiated by a single special education teacher to a single vocational-technical teacher. Those two individuals would discuss possibilities of mainstreaming a particular special needs student into a vocational-technical class. If a "deal" was cut, the student would be allowed access to a class. Unfortunately, the vocational-technical teacher had little or no knowledge of what to do with the "special education" student. Now, because of excellent inservicing provided to both groups at the same time, a standardized procedure exists for placing special needs students into vocational-technical classes. Curricula have been modified, special materials are available to vocational-technical teachers to utilize with special needs students, Individualized Educational Programs and vocational plans are also being developed by a team working together to enhance vocational programs for all special needs students.

Another important result of Project Interface is the concept of a "Building Support Team." This team approach provides valuable assistance in bringing all needed personnel together in a building to discuss placement, programming and other concerns regarding special needs students relative to vocational planning. Now, whenever an individual special needs student becomes a focus of concern, all of that student's teachers in that building are brought together as a team to discuss the student's strengths and weaknesses.

Modification of the Home and Family Life and Business and Office (modification of the Industrial Arts curricula is scheduled to take place in August, 1986) curricula has proved to be a valuable accomplishment. These modified curricula provide vocational-technical teachers with appropriate, realistic student learning objectives, together with special materials and grading procedures that greatly enhance opportunities for success for any special needs students enrolled in vocational-technical classes. Now, vocational-technical teachers are not apprehensive about having special needs students in their classes. They have an instrument that assist them in providing appropriate educational activities to their special needs students.

Project Interface is a program that will endeavor to provide continuous funding to maintain the interfacing that now exist between special education and vocational-technical teachers. There exist a need for continuous group inservices, workshops, seminars, etc. Also, special materials need to be reviewed, evaluated, and purchased for all personnel involved in the program. Continuous funding will come from grants, federal, state and local sources.

An important result of Project Interface is how the program concept coincidentally flowed over into our local area Vocational Skills Center. For approximately three years, special needs students from our area have been scheduled into various vocational classes in the skills center for three hour blocks. By chance, the director of that center heard of Project Interface and requested additional information. Subsequently, the staff of the center was inserviced regarding Project Interface. What resulted was a different approach for placing special needs student in the various vocational classes at the center. Every special education student from one of our four districts, who desires to attend the skills center, is given a vocational skills assessment on MESA. Once those skills are accessed, they are matched with the entry level skills required by the skills' center staff. If the match is determined to be acceptable the student is enrolled into the desired class. If the match is questionable, alternative programs are recommended to the student and parents. The fact has facilitated excellent communications between the skill's center personnel and interested parties at the senior high schools. In addition, special needs students attending the skills center are placed into appropriate classes for which they have entry level skills, thus enhancing the probability that they will achieve success and learn valuable vocational skills.

RECOMMENDATIONS/IMPLICATIONS

Since April, 1985 when Project Interface was begun, progress has been rapid. Indeed, some goals have been realized that were not indicated as part of the original plan. This fact has presented several problems. One, evaluation of the overall design has had to be monitored, primarily, by the Project Manager and Project Director. This process has been carried out on a day-to-day basis as particular problems, concerns and questions arise. It is realized that various evaluation techniques and instruments need be to devised and implemented to better understand what is happening, as well as to guide Project Interface personnel toward future programming. Nevertheless, because of the day-to-day monitoring process several recommendations as well as implications have surfaced.

A) Our vocational assessment instruments need to be expanded. At present our vocational assessment instruments are only capable of measuring 80% of all students. We need additional units to MESA that will be able to assess lower functioning students. Our goal is topurchase additional assessment equipment that has this capability.

B) The Building Support Team's functions need to be streamlined. That is, each individual involved as a support team member needs to better understand their individual role. The mechanics of how the team cooperates with each other needs refining. Future team meetings will be scheduled so that a concise, written plan is developed relative to each members responsibilities.

C) While some special materials have been reviewed, evaluated and are presently being used by the Home and Family Life and Business and Office teachers, it is of paramount importance that additional materials be forthcoming. The Project Manager and Project Director are in the process of implementing a design to facilitate this need. All personnel involved should and will be involved with selection of special classroom materials that are utilized for special needs students.

D) Funding is crucial if Project Interface is to continue assisting teachers and provide valuable vocational activities for special needs students. In this regard it is the Project Manager and Director's responsibility to seek and obtain funding from any available source.

E) Continuous inservicing must be ongoing. All personnel involved need to be periodically advised as to how Project Interface is functioning. Additionally, specialists need to address Project Interface personnel as to techniques and methods of working with special needs students. Inservicing will provide Project Interface personnel with the opportunity to "rub elbows" to discover what each is doing in their respective buildings. Inservicing will enhance morale and provide solutions to a multitude of concerns. Lastly, ongoing inservices will provide new personnel involved with Project Interface with necessary information to assist them in maintaining ongoing programs.

DISSEMINATION

Project Interface embodies many concepts that have enhanced and will continue to enhance vocational programs for all special needs students. Because of this, dissemination of the program needs to be an ongoing process. Plans call for soliciting state-wide agencies and organizations for presentation slots. The goal is to allow classroom teachers, administrators, and counselors the opportunity to share their programs when the opportunity becomes available.

To date the PROJECT INTERFACE has been presented to:

1. Superintendents from Central Valley School District, Freeman School District, East Valley School District and West Valley School District.
2. Central Valley School District Board Members.
3. All senior high school vocational-technical and special education personnel.
4. All staff at Spokane Area Vocational Skills Center.
5. All Junior High and Senior High School Administrators within the Central Valley School District.
6. All secondary counselors within the four different school districts.
7. All parents of senior high school aged special education students via the annual I.E.P process.
8. Central Valley School District's General Vocational Advisory Committee.
9. Executive Board of the Valley Chapter Kiwanis Club.
10. E.S.D. 101 "Ideas Conference." January, 1986.
11. "Career Development For A Changing Workplace" Conference, Eastern Washington University - Spokane Center, March 20, 1986.

EVALUATION

Evaluation of Project Interface is presently in progress. Administrators, vocationaltechnical, and special education personnel have been asked to respond to evaluation questionnaires. Once these questionnaires have been completed, returned and the data analyzed, a synopsis of the results will be forwarded to be added to this final report. This data will be forwarded with the completed, fiscal report.

APPENDIX

LIST OF INSTRUCTIONAL MATERIALS
DEVELOPED UNDER THE PROJECT

1. Home and Family Life curriculum for Special Needs Students, September, 1985.

2. Business and Office/Distributive Education Curricula for Special Needs Students, April, 1986.

3. Industrial Arts curricula for Special Needs Students.*

4. Evaluation Instrument - Special Education Teachers

5. Evaluation Instrument - Special Education Teachers

* Will be developed during 1986/87 school year.